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A CAROL
AND OTHER RHYMES

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A CAROL
AND OTHER RHYMES

By
EDWARD JOHNSTON

London
Hampshire House Workshops
Hampshire Hog Lane, Hammersmith
1915

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To BT. J.
and All concerned

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PREFACE

AND AN APOLOGY FOR “ POETRY ”

THE Carol and other Rhymes which follow are published by, and at the instance of, a friend. Responsibility rests with me for consenting, for adding notes, and for seeing the book through the press.

The contents are entitled, “Rhymes ” because the majority of the lines actually are rhyming : they are not called “ Verses,” because in these days much skilled work is made public under that name, and these have little or no skill. Whether they may be

called “ Poems ” I am not capable of judging, nor could my judgement approach the orthodox which demands in Poetry an almost artificial perfection of form, though the dictionary tells us that the word Poem is from the Greek *poiēma*, literally *the thing made* (from *poieō—to make*), and the People who make our Vulgar Tongue have given the word “ poetry ” the widest meaning.

It is desirable to keep such great words inclusive, and, when they are wanted, to coin exclusive words—if such there may be—for the critical discrimination of various sorts and kinds : for example, it might be

convenient to distinguish between the poems of form and the poems of sense.

But sense and form are in reality interdependent and neither is known to exist without the other ; so, if we permit ourselves such a critical distinction, we must regard them as equally important. Yet we find it so easy to cultivate form, so hard to cultivate sense, that, if we are critically *bent** (as all of us are at times), we weigh too much the errors in form and are more troubled by literal than by spiritual flaws. In fact, the Critic in us—like the Artist in us—thinks

* Observe that while “bent” in Norway means “straight,” in England it may mean either straight or crooked !

rather of how a thing looks than of what a thing is : the judgement is not merely tempted by taste and appearance, it reasons that these are its only guides to good quality : it says—in a sense truly—“ I cannot tell what a thing really is, but I can tell what it looks like.” But, in our hearts (if we could but tell it !) we know better.

I have heard a man say “ Browning wrote some splendid things, but he was not a Poet.” What was he then ? Are we to suppose that Browning had the *makings* but not the *manners* of a Poet ? Was his “ poetry ” right in sense but not in form ? That is

difficult to believe, for sense and form are not really separable. But indeed if we are to escape from an eventual mad perfection, we must, I think, in written words—whether in measure or not—put sense on an equal footing with form. And I would even plead that the proverb of Alice's Duchess—"Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves"—though made by one of the greatest writers of Nonsense, is strictly true, provided we do not despise form or confuse sense with that broken reasoning sometimes called "logic."

For my own Rhymes, then, I shall claim in all humility only that they

mean something, even if they are not “poetry,” and so that they may be freed from the least touch of poetical obscurity, I have added explanatory notes repeating much of their meaning in plain prose. The kindly Reader discovering the need for a further and a more “apologetic” apology, will perhaps be able to read one into this.

E. J.

Ditchling, December, 1915.

A CAROL

Written on one of the endleaves of a 13th Century Chronicle in the British Museum (Plato B. 100). The Chronicle treats of the " Weye of Lyf " of workmen and others, and draws largely upon the work of the English Monk Bartholomew Anglicus (" De Proprietatibus Rerum " c. 1260). It was apparently the property of one Nicholas Greenwell, a potter near Chichester : vide " the 3rd verse."

The Carol is actually signed in the hand of the writer, John Rode, and the potter has added a note " called a madde preste but I praye S. Nicholas sende

more of his maddnesse ” : vide the 5th verse.

N. Greenwell adds also a number of remarks mixed with recipes and notes of experiments (for glazes?) saying after one, “ from the eest,” “ I doubte yf the thre Ks. knew itt.” Presently he hints that John Rode is not the “ preste’s true name whiche I may not tell yt,” and adds “ God spede hym hee lerned me writtyng.”

Note : (“ the 3rd verse.”) “ the 3rd verse of a Carol ” referred to and quoted in the “ Potter’s Kalendar ” of 1605, is identical (except in spelling) with the verse written in the margin of the old MS. and partly between Rode’s 2nd

and 3rd verses. It was obviously inserted by the hand of the potter. It reads thus :

“ þe Potter gafe hym to playe
In his hoofe for nourferaye
þe clay flewen at his word §
So lete Potters preyfe þe Lord
Qui creauit omnia.”

(§ The 3rd line probably refers to the legend of the Holy Child and the clay sparrows).

Note : Verse 1. the last two lines only of this are decipherable. I have preceded these with three that I heard sung by a little child—They have nothing pre-Elizabethan about them, save their

extreme simplicity, but I think they may come nearer the probable sense and feeling of the first verse than would a conjectural “ reading ” of the damaged lines.

E. J.

* herefore Goders preyse be Lord

* Here the Manuscript begins : *vide* foregoing note.

His fader was a Carpenter
Who ymade bothe round and square
And wrought al thing of a borde
Carpenters schal preyse þe Lord

His makës weren fishermen
Taketh þey and tourne agen
And haleth þeir nettes aborde
Fishermen alle preyse þe Lord

First of men vpon þe ertþe
Shepheards dyd admire his byrth
Renning atte þe angel's worde
So lat shepherdes preyse þe Lord

His cosyn was a temple preste
Serueth ones atte þe hiegh feste
Hee coude nought speke o worde
Þrestes wyth fere mote preyse þe Lord

Thre Kynge were his gyft-bringers
Folwed his harbinger
Comen þe brighte sterre towarde
He and Kynge may preyse þe Lord

Gretely hee dyd bless þe poore
For þe lasse þey schal have more
Wyth synners he dyd acorde
Let poore synners preyse þe Lord

Some poore folke do trauaille yet
Waityng for þat blessed Worde—
So lat alle creatures preyse þe Lord

FROM A COLOPHON

In a modern manuscript made in
the ancient way with golden initials.

Spurn not FINE GOLD
O FOOT-OF-CLAY,
Nor scorn the OLD
O FALLEN-AWAY :

Let ANCIENT-WAY
Be aid to NEW,
And coming DAY
Pick out the True :

O happy few,
Whose hearts enfold
HERB-WET-WITH-DEW
And-Wisdom-Old,

Wide-eyed behold
With simple Fay*
DECEMBER-COLD
And GLOWING-MAY.

* Faith.

FROM ANOTHER COLOPHON

Having been commissioned to inscribe on vellum Edward FitzGerald's "Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám," I desired to traverse the most tangible of his arguments, and therefore concealed these lines in an ornamentation of the colophon.

The Smooth & Fine from force & fire
may shrink,
O Brittle unbroke, O Flawed without
a chink,
Ye serve high uses of the Overlord,
Who serve the demigods in meat and
drink.

O humble Pots and noble Amphorae
That guess at what has been and what
shall be,

THERE IS a Riddle which concerns
you *now*

THAT IS even greater than eternity.

THAT IS which cleaves, and *by*
which cleaves, the clay,

Counts even the Potsherd which is
cast away,

One with the deep blue Bowl that
holds the night,

One with the golden Bowl that holds
the day.

DAVID WAS SEVEN YESTERDAY

A Song of Stillness and Strength

O Little Lion of Hammersmith
The Prince of JUDAH strengthen
thee !
That thou may'st still while young
and blythe,
Be used to set his people free.

Thou art a Lion and yet a Lamb,
And one must from the other save.
God give thee too such skill to tame
As he to Shepherd David gave.

O grave young shepherd of thy
thoughts,
Keeping thy sheep in Woldingham,
His Angel watches over thee,
Thou shalt not lose the smallest
lamb.

By pastures green thy thoughts be
led,
And by the streams of peace reclined ;
But, ON THAT DAY, in torrent bed,
May you God's rounded pebbles find !

THE STARS ARE SEEN BY GOD ALONE

Each glory that we worship here
How many an ancient year has gone
Since first it threw its shining spear !

The light of our Beloved's eyes,
That did our worship swift compel,
Has yet to pierce a thousand skies
To find the spirit's citadel.

The SEARCH on which we all em-
bark
To find the Thing which we believe
Flies, like an arrow, to the Mark
That all our years can scarce achieve.

No journey brings us face to face—
With these, our hope, our love, our
star :

Across the ways of time and space
Our Near must be forever Far.

Yet Love divine brings these to
pass ;
And Love will bring all things
about—

And that dim vision in our glass
Shall clear, and gloriously shine out—

For God, who loveth everywhere,
Enters wherever hearts do bow ;
Love is not only Then and There
But Love is Here and Now.

By Love all things are joined and wed,
The Void uncrossable is filled,
The fields of space are harvested,
The waves of time are stilled.

Each Glory shines within the heart—
By Love, with each we are at one :
In us God still performs his part

THOUGHTS OF A CHILD ON CHRISTMAS EVE

I can feel it with my toe,
They haven't filled it yet. I *know*
That Father Christmas is "pretence,"
I think it's Daddy : it's not sense
To think he could take all the toys
To-night to all the girls and boys
In every house in every street—
There must be such a lot of feet :
And all their stockings to be filled
And nothing ever lost or spilled.
It is the Fathers and the Mothers
Who bring to me, and to the others,
The chocolates, but I don't know
Where all the nuts and apples grow—
It may be magic after all. (Sleeps)

NOTES

GENERAL NOTE ON PRINTING

A Penman naturally regards capitals and small letters not so much as necessary to each other but as *different writings* available for different purposes. He uses large capitals or he writes in colour ("Rubricating") to mark or distinguish parts of his text—marking *beginnings* especially (as the printer does still) with large initials and words in capitals.* Most of the foregoing Rhymes were originally written in this manner on vellum, and I have retained these features in type.

* For example, the early scribes would generally keep capital "A" for the beginning of a "chapter" (Lat. "*Capitulum*") and small "a" for the body of the text, even in writing proper names (before the twelfth century), as "adam et heva."

The mode in which the pen formed the letters of the old formal manuscripts—those letters which the printers borrowed later—may be illustrated by a rough diagram.



*10th Century—14th Century freely copied
English MS.*

This is how they wrote books in Winchester one hundred years before the Norman Conquest: by the fourteenth century formal writing had become much more cramped.

THE CAROL

The modern “**Black letter**” type in which the Carol is printed is a somewhat impoverished descendant of the later manuscript forms. It is used here* to simulate the appearance of the manuscript in which the Carol must have existed—supposing that it had really been written—in the fourteenth century ; that is to say, about one hundred years before printing with movable types was first used (c. 1456 A.D.) in Europe. Large capitals—rather rounder and fatter than our Roman Capitals—would probably have been used at the beginning, in order to mark this part, and make it contrast with the body of the text.

* I have used type rather than a “reproduction” of my manuscript, chiefly because the photo-typographic process destroys the natural qualities of writing.

THE HISTORIC NOTE : This is, of course, imaginary and intended to forward the illusion of Time, which is supported by the printing and the spelling. The book of Bartholomew Anglicus, “ *De Proprietatibus Rerum*,” (on an end leaf of which the Carol is *supposed* to have been written by one “ John Rode ”—about one hundred years later), did actually exist in the latter half of the thirteenth century. The statement at the end—“ I have preceded these with three that I heard sung by a little child ”—is also quite correct.*

The legend *of the Holy Child and the clay*

* These lines were composed by my own daughter (at the age of six), and sung by her during a drive home from a picnic, until a clergyman, who was of the party, begged her to sing something different.

sparrows is to be found in the New Testament Apocrypha.*

THE SPELLING : This is only approximately correct : being ignorant of “ Middle English ” I had to pick out the proper forms as well as I could from Langland’s † “ Piers the Plowman.” The letter “ thorn ” (þ) is used—as it was in most cases by Langland—for the heavy sound of th—as in “ the ” (þe).‡ I have indifferently put in a few extra es

* The legend—in the first Book of Infancy, Ch. xv, verses 1, 2, & 6—reads thus : “ And when the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys, his companions, about the same age. Who, when they were at play, made clay into several shapes, namely, asses, oxen, birds, and other figures. . . . He had also made the figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly, and when he commanded to stand still, did stand still ; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink.”

† c. 1332 A.D.—1400 A.D.

‡ This was afterwards written more like ye, hence our modern-old-fashioned, incorrect YE.

and substituted ys for is (but this is in accordance with the apparent precedent of the best Langland manuscript), and I have manufactured the words *weren, haleth, shepheards, cosyn, gretely, and swet*; the other words are to be found in "Piers the Plowman."

THE SENSE : The words of the Carol (with sufficient punctuation) are given in their modern forms thus :

MARY SAT A-WORKING WITH HER
BABY ON HER ARM :
THE ANGEL CAME TO BETHLE-
HEM :
TO SEE THAT SIGHT WITH JOY :
Therefore Mothers praise the Lord
*Who created all things.**

* The refrain, "*Qui creavit omnia*" = Who created

HIS Father was a Carpenter
Who made [things] both round and square
And wrought all things of a board :
Carpenters shall praise the Lord
Who created all things.

HIS companions were fishermen :
They tack and turn again
And haul their nets aboard :
Fishermen all praise the Lord
Who created all things.

First of men upon the earth
Shepherds wondered at his birth,
Running at the angel's word :
So let shepherds praise the Lord
Who created all things.

all things, is to be found in a fifteenth century carol beginning "*O Flos de Jesse Virgula*": it forms the end-line of one of the verses, thus :

HIS Cousin was a temple-priest :
[He] Serveth once at the high feast :
He could not speak one word :
Priests with fear must praise the Lord
Who created all things.

Three Kings were his gift-bringers :
[They] Followed his harbinger :
[They] Came the bright star toward :
Yea and Kings may praise the Lord
Who created all things.

Greatly did he bless the poor :
For the less they shall have more :
With sinners he did accord :
Let poor sinners praise the Lord
Who created all things.

“ Now is He born, that blissful Child,
Of Mary mother, maiden mild ;
Fro the fiend He us shield,
Qui creavit omnia.” [1910).
(“ Ancient English Christmas Carols ” : E. Rickert,

ALL CREATION GROANED AND TOILED

(Some poor folk do labour yet)

Looking for that blessed Word :

So let all creatures praise the Lord

Who created all things.

At the time of writing the Carol I had in mind the making-of-Things and the desirableness of counting men as craftsmen rather than as “consumers”; in other words, that it would be better if we produced (and consumed) good things, than if we consumed (and, therefore, *produced*) “cheap” things. I then thought of those who had to do with our Lord in the light of craftsmen and workmen, who, knowing something of creation, would or should

praise God the Creator of all things. The craftsmen mentioned are :

The Carpenter Joseph (v. Luke ii, 4 ;
Matt. xiii, 55).

The Fishermen—Peter, Andrew,
James, John, & others (v. Matt.
iv, 18, 21 ; John xxi, 2, 3.)

The Priest Zacharias (v. Luke i, 5-22.)

The Shepherds (v. Luke ii, 8-18.)

The Three Kings—or wise men (v.
Matt. ii, 1-12.)

The Poor (sinners)* (v. Luke vi, 20, &
xix, 1-10.)

It may be noted that the Carol suggests that Mothers—whose craft of Motherhood makes them supreme over all other craftsmen, and who add to this all the crafts of

*The poor generally *are* craftsmen, by force of circumstances, and the term “poor sinners” will include most of us, from the gardener Adam down.

housework—*do* praise the Lord, that Priests *must with fear*, and that Kings *may*.

Note on the obvious parenthesis in the last verse of the Carol : I think this must have been put in for the benefit of chilly carol singers—to point the occasion for a demonstration upon the door of the snug householder.

NOTE ON THE WORD “ COLOPHON ” (pp. 17 & 19)

“ COLOPHON, an ancient city of Asia Minor, . . . eight miles north of Ephesus It [is one of the towns which] claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, . . . The ancient proverb τὸν Κολοφῶνα ἐπέθηκεν (he has put the colophon to the matter), has [given us] the word “ colophon ” . . .

employed to designate the concluding lines of early printed works, containing the title, date, &c. The adage is said to have arisen either from the decisive influence of the Colophonian cavalry in a contest, or from the fact that the citizens had the casting vote in the great Ionian assembly." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th ed.).

Mr. Falconer Madan (" *Books in Manuscript* ") says :—" *Colophons* or concluding notes, in which the scribe's most inward mind at the moment of the completion of his long task is often revealed, whether the uppermost feeling be weariness, malignity, religious feeling, animated expectancy, or humour."

From my own book (" *Writing & Illuminating, & Lettering* ") I quote :—" *The*

Colophon . . . generally distinguished from the text by a smaller or different hand, and—especially in early printed books—by *colour* or other decorative treatment, occurs at the end of a book, where it is the traditional right of the penman and the printer to add a statement or a symbolical device . . . the craftsman . . . marking the end of, and *signing* his work in any way he chooses—even in a speech or a sentiment.”

FROM A COLOPHON

(p. 17)

The colophon is inscribed in a MS. copy of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson’s “The Ideal Book or Book Beautiful” which he commissioned me to write out for him: the Rhyme is preceded by these words :

“ Book VII : fin : 18 : Aug :

M C M

+

SCRIPTOR LOQ : ”

The Rhyme deals with contrasts—particularly of the old and the new—and suggests that the truth is found in *these opposites combined* :* “Herb-wet-with-dew”

* This idea may be made clearer by the following extract from “Sir Percival” by J. H. Shorthouse : a “Mr. Simeon” says : “You may suppose that I am opposed to those who earnestly advocate extremes, and that I am in favour of a golden mean. You are mistaken. I go far beyond them ; I am for all extremes. The truth does not lie in the middle, or in one extreme, but in both extremes. . . . if extremes will please you I am your man ; only remember it is not *one* extreme that we are to go to, but *both* extremes. We shall both be ready, in the estimation of the world, to go to Bedlam together.” (Absolute Truth perhaps lies in “all extremes.” E. J.)

is the latest fashion from Paradise—those are happy who can wear it with (old) wisdom (*cf.* Bunyan's Shepherd boy).

FROM ANOTHER COLOPHON*

(p. 19)

The “most tangible” argument of FitzGerald's Omar Khayyám is contained in the parable of the pots, where some of the pots ask questions—in effect questioning the Potter. FitzGerald's Omar,† it is true,

* I am interested to find that my protesting is not original. FitzGerald, referring to the mutilation and corruption of the Omar MSS., says : “The Scribes, too, of the Oxford and Calcutta MSS., seem to do their Work under a sort of Protest ; each beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not), taken out of its alphabetical order ; the Oxford with one of Apology ; the Calcutta with one of Expostulation. . . ”

† He is described thus in fairness to the original Omar. FitzGerald knew (as he tells us in his preface) that there were various views regarding Omar, and

asks questions throughout his Rubáiyát rather than finds fault, but the impression which he creates (and has not, apparently,

that while some held him to be "even something of a Saint," he himself believed him to have been a *Philosopher who, while he praised wine, "bragged more than he drank of it."* In fairness to FitzGerald, who has made Omar's fame—such as it is—in the West, it must be said that this was a carefully considered opinion: he was quite within his rights in recording that impression in his wonderful verses, but his version of the Rubáiyát is admittedly free, and, there seems to be little doubt that it is too free. The Editor of the "fourth edition" (Macmillan, 1897), says "It must be admitted that FitzGerald took great liberties with the original. . .," and, after giving two examples, quotes Professor Cowell as writing that, in Stanza lxxxi (4th ed.) "There is no original for the line about the snake :. . . I have always supposed that the last line is FitzGerald's mistaken version of Quatr. 236 in Nicholas's ed. which runs thus :

'O thou who knowest the secrets of every one's
mind,
Who graspest every one's hand in the hour of
weakness,
O God, give me repentance and accept my excuses
O thou who givest repentance and acceptest the
excuses of every one.'"

been at pains to guard against) is one of adverse criticism of the "Scheme of Things" which *seems* to impute blame to the Creator.

It seems to me that for the finite to blame the infinite shows a false philosophy, for the finite does not possess the data on which to base such adverse criticism. In other words, *if one does not know God's object* one is not in a position to criticise the manner in which He attains it.*

The counter-argument of my Rhyme runs thus :

* Though each is subject to the weakness of ignorance, there is this great difference between *praise* and *blame*: that blame turns away and, in effect, denies, while praise turns towards and, in effect, accepts. The philosophy of FitzGerald's Omar cannot approach the philosophy of some of the Psalms of David, and, likewise, even the remarkable beauty of some of FitzGerald's stanzas pales before the beauty of David's faith in Creation and the Creator (cf. F.'s stanzas xxxiii, xcvi, with Psalms civ and xxiii).

(1st stanza). The unsatisfied Pots having questioned their construction and their end, it is pointed out to them that yet they are not broken or cracked, and that such "faults" as they may have will not prevent their being made use of—indeed that more "perfect" pots might be less useful.

Carrying out the idea of the Pots standing for *persons*, the Men whom they served ("in meat and drink") would be to them as demigods. And—as it was surely intended in the Divine Creation that earthenware should be for man's service—the Pots in serving men, served also the high uses of the Divine Creator or "Overlord." (It will be seen, moreover, that if we invert the parable, and say: "*people are as pots*"—there is a suggestion here, that, between us and the Infinite, there may be imagined a superior order of Beings whom we serve in our turn.)

(2nd stanza). The Pots, both small

and great, that concern themselves with “ Whence ” and “ Whither ”—that “ look before and after, and pine for what is not ” —are reminded that the Riddle of the Being which IS is greater than the riddle of past and future Time. (The answer is found in the *Burning Bush*, Exodus iii, 1-14.)

(3rd stanza). That Being which cleaves the clay asunder, that Being by which the clay is held together forgets nothing, but holds that rejected or broken Thing—which we call “ cast away ”—as Part of the Great Universe that can spare nothing ; in which Love bears, hopes, believes, and endures All Things.

DAVID WAS SEVEN YESTERDAY (p. 21)

The strength of a lion and the quietness or meekness of a lamb must dwell in accord in the heart that will overcome Evil : the

peace of still waters and the force of a torrent
must sustain and arm a Knight of Heaven.

THE STARS ARE SEEN BY GOD
ALONE

(p. 24)

“No man can justly censure or condemn another, because indeed no man truly knows another. This I perceive in myself ; for I am in the dark to all the world, and my nearest friends behold me but in a cloud. God, Who truly knows me, knows that I am nothing ; for He only beholds me, and all the world ; Who looks not on us through a derived ray, or a trajection of a sensible species, but beholds the substance without the helps of accidents, and the forms of things as we their operations.” (From Sir Thomas Browne, M.D., *Religio Medici*, A.D. 1643.)

ARGUMENT : We see the light of the stars, not the stars themselves : we see the light reflected from a piece of white paper, not the paper itself. In other words, we see what things are *doing* rather than what they *are*. But as light takes time to travel—however short the distance—it is more exact to say that we see what things *have been doing*. This is the way in which we “ see ” all material objects, whether “ near ” or “ far,” but it is impressed on us in the case of the stars, because we understand that the light of the nearest star—our Sun—takes over eight minutes to reach the Earth, and the light from the Sun’s nearest neighbour nearly four years, while the flight of the light from the great majority of stars, it is said, “ is to be reckoned

in hundreds of years.” Truly, though we see the starshine, we can hardly say that we see the stars shining (the action of our bodily sight, therefore, is an act of faith—for Faith is “the evidence of things not seen.”)

If we see, then, in the material world only what a thing is doing—or has done—but not the thing itself, how may we hope that our Love, or Faith, or Hope will ever discover its objective? Divine Love—which knows all Things—IS, and therefore does not depend on time to reach things, or on that which we call “nearness”—and in the very word confess distance.

In the heart of Man there is the shining of all his “stars”—those “stars” which he cannot reach, or even see with his bodily

eyes—but yet he may be in touch with them—Divine Love in his heart sees the stars for him.

THOUGHTS OF A CHILD ON CHRISTMAS EVE

(p. 27)

Written in December, 1910, for a competition in the “Saturday Westminster”* in which the “Thoughts of a Child on Christmas Eve” were to be expressed in verse.

My guessing received something better than a prize, namely an authoritative confirmation ; for, on the night of Christmas Eve, my little girl (nearly aged five) took my hand and said : “ Father Christmas is pretence, isn’t he, Daddy ? I think it’s you or mother.”

* It appeared in that paper on December 24th—not as a prize winner.

*Printed at The Westminster Press,
411a Harrow Road, London, W.*

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